FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 21, 2019

PRESS CONTACT
Henrike Dessaulles
media@refugeerights.org
516.838.1269

IRAP WELCOMES PROTECTIONS FOR U.S. ALLIES IN AFGHANISTAN IN DEFENSE AND SPENDING BILLS

(New York, NY) – The International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) welcomes Congress’ decision to include 4,000 additional visas for Afghan allies who are at risk for providing faithful service to the United States in this year’s defense and spending bills. The defense bill also renews the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program for another year and expands protections for Afghans who worked for or on behalf of the United States in Afghanistan. IRAP thanks our congressional champions for providing relief to thousands of Afghan partners, many of whom have been waiting in perilous situations for years.

“We are grateful to Congress for ensuring Afghan allies who face persecution because of their service continue to have access to this life-saving program,” said Adam Bates, IRAP’s Policy Counsel. “U.S. troops, diplomats, and humanitarian workers all rely on local partners to pursue their mission. The U.S. government has a responsibility to protect these trusted allies.”

Since 2009, the Afghan SIV program has provided a pathway to safety for Afghans who worked alongside U.S. personnel as interpreters, security personnel, cultural advisors, and in other capacities, and who often become the target of the Taliban and local militias as a result of their service. Approving additional visas in legislation signed today is an important step in the United States’ commitment to these Afghan partners.

IRAP extends its gratitude to congressional champions who support Afghan partners, including Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-IL), Rep. Seth Moulton (D-MA); Senate Armed Services Chair Jim Inhofe (R-OK) and Ranking Member Jack Reed (D-RI); Senate Appropriations Chair Richard Shelby (R-AL) and Ranking Member Patrick Leahy (D-VT); House Armed Services Chairman Adam Smith (D-CWA) and Ranking Member Mac Thornberry (R-TX); and House Appropriations Chair and Ranking Member Nita Lowey (D-NY) and Ranking Member Kay Granger (R-TX). IRAP is deeply grateful for the leadership and bipartisan efforts of these champions to advance this important national security program. IRAP is also grateful to advocates Beena Patel and Josh Andrews of FaegreBD, Human Rights First, and Refugee Council USA.

To view the press release, click here.

###